

no partisan agenda. They came as Americans who wished to spare their fellow parents and family members the mourning, fear and terror they felt 6 months ago. Their message is clear: honor the memories of the little children of these educators by helping to ensure that no other family is forced to endure such an unimaginable tragedy.

It had been unimaginable. Now we have seen it. Now our task is plain. We must restore confidence in the safety of our communities by taking clear, effective steps to prevent gun violence in our schools, homes, and neighborhoods.

I just read the names and showed the pictures of a few of the people whose lives were lost that day. For them and for others and for the lives we want to save, again I mention the bipartisan Thompson-King, King-Thompson legislation, which means to use this anniversary, certainly, to memorialize the victims of Newtown, but also to answer the call of their families to give gun violence prevention legislation a vote in the Congress of the United States.

Six months ago in Newtown, a lone gunman took the lives of 26 Americans. We all know that. It's emblazoned in our minds and in our souls. Since then, nearly 5,000 more Americans have fallen victim to gun violence. Now in Congress we must summon the courage to act. We must take inspiration from the courage of the Newtown families, from the courage it has taken to turn their grief into action. We must heed the moving words of the Sandy Hook promise: our hearts are broken; our spirit is not. As we mark this anniversary, we must uphold our most basic responsibility: the oath we take—the oath of office—to protect and defend the Constitution and to protect and defend the people of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague Congresswoman ESTY and our colleague Congressman MIKE THOMPSON for their leadership in bringing us together this morning so that we cannot only remember but so that we can have the courage to act.

NEWTOWN ANNIVERSARY AND GUN CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. I rise to join the leader. I rise to join Congresswoman ESTY and Congressman THOMPSON in recognizing this sad anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that we mark the 6-month anniversary tomorrow of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown.

On that day, as has been repeated and must be remembered, Americans were united in shock and grief at the senseless murder by a crazed gunman of 26 innocent people—of 20 innocent first graders and six courageous school staff members—who tried to protect them and helped save the lives of others. Since that day, approximately 4,500—the leader mentioned 5,000, but it's a

figure in excess of 4,500—Americans have died as a result of gun violence, according to the Newtown Action Alliance.

Mr. Speaker, this is not just a tragedy; it is an epidemic, one that Congress has a moral responsibility to address. When nine out of 10 Americans support stricter background checks to keep dangerous guns out of the hands of criminals and those with mental illness, there is no reason why Congress shouldn't be able to take swift and decisive action to enact tougher protections. I was deeply disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that the Senate failed to move forward with legislation to protect Americans from gun violence by enacting effective background checks that safeguard the constitutional rights of responsible gun owners and safeguard Americans.

The American people are demanding action, and the House now has a chance to succeed where the Senate failed. Demonstrating that commonsense proposals to reduce gun violence can, indeed, command bipartisan support, Democratic Representative MIKE THOMPSON of California, who chairs the House Democratic Task Force on Gun Violence, and my friend Republican Representative PETER KING of New York have joined together to introduce legislation in this Chamber similar to that which was blocked in the Senate. There is not a single provision in their bill that should be worrisome to those concerned about our longstanding tradition of protecting Second Amendment rights—not a single provision.

It will help us keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous and mentally unstable individuals likely to do harm to others or themselves. Will it keep all of us safe all the time? It will not. We know that. That is the tragic fact of life. But will it help? It will. If we can help, should we? The answer is an emphatic "yes."

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This proposal contains commonsense proposals that I strongly support and that most Americans have supported, as well.

Congress has the opportunity to get this right by considering the Thompson-King legislation in the House and sending it to the Senate for consideration.

I congratulate Congresswoman ESTY in particular, as well as Congressman THOMPSON, for their leadership and efforts in this regard. After the backlash many Senators received for opposing expanded background checks, I suspect that a number may be ready to reconsider.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to come together, as Representative THOMPSON and Representative KING have done, to advance this bipartisan solution to this pressing challenge facing our Nation—not just the Congress, but every American.

It should not take and it must not take another tragedy such as Newtown

for us to act. We have a responsibility to keep our neighborhoods and our schools safe. I urge Speaker BOEHNER and Majority Leader CANTOR to allow this bill to come to the floor for a vote.

The Speaker often says that he wants to allow the House to work its will. That's why the people of Newtown sent Congresswoman ESTY to Congress. That's why the people of my district and every district represented in this House, people sent them here to vote on policies, policies to make their country better, policies to make their country more safe.

The memories of those children, the memories of those teachers, the memories of those 26, and, yes, the memories of those 4,500-plus who, since the Newtown tragedy, have lost their lives to violence, their memory, Mr. Speaker, demands and deserves action by their representatives.

GUN REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, 6 months ago tomorrow, Newtown experienced unimaginable tragedy and unparalleled loss.

That loss, the painful loss of sons and daughters, spouses, siblings, and friends, is still very raw and will always run very deep for the people of Newtown. Yet, in the face of that unimaginable tragedy on that day and on the days since, this small community that has been through so much has inspired our Nation with tremendous courage and resilience.

Americans have been inspired by the sixth grade educators who gave their very lives to defend and protect their students.

Americans have been inspired by the brave first responders who arrived on the scene to save others and live with the trauma of what they saw that day.

Americans have been inspired by the Sandy Hook families who, despite living with the pain that one can only begin to imagine, have responded to loss not with anger or hate, but with unbelievable love, strength, and courage.

They've taken their call to action to Hartford, where a comprehensive set of commonsense gun laws passed with bipartisan support. They've taken the call to action to State capitols around this country. And they've taken that call to action here in Washington, but here they've faced inexplicable political cowardice.

Mr. Speaker, in the 6 months since that terrible day, since we lost 26 precious lives in Newtown, nearly 4,800 Americans have also lost their lives to gun violence. But during that same time, this House has not held a single vote on commonsense gun reform to reduce and prevent gun violence, not even enhanced criminal background checks.

Forty-six Senators blocked an up-or-down vote on enhanced background

checks. This is a reform that the members of the Newtown community have asked our elected leaders to support. It is a reform supported by over 90 percent of the American people, and it is shameful that we have not yet had a chance to vote.

Yet, in spite of that obstruction and misinformation, these families and this community have refused to give up. On Tuesday, I was honored to again meet with several of the Newtown families as they traveled here to continue to lead the push for commonsense gun laws, and I'm honored that several members of that community of the Newtown Alliance are with us here in the gallery today.

In meeting with the families, I was given pictures of their loved ones that they've been handing out to elected officials from across the country.

This photo of school psychologist Mary Sherlach reads:

One of six educators who, on December 14, became first responders equipped with just their lives. Can you show the same courage with your vote?

On this card, we have a picture of Dylan Hockley, with these words:

Honor his life. Stand with us for change. Now is the time.

Here's the picture of precious Dylan Hockley.

With this card, we have the photo of 6-year-old Benjamin Wheeler, who asks:

What is worth doing?

Mr. Speaker, these words, these faces, these lives mark the call to action for Newtown. They mark the call to action in Hartford and Aurora, Chicago, Santa Monica, and every community torn apart by gun violence.

The sad truth is that this Congress has not met this call to action. This Congress has not shown the courage to pass commonsense gun reforms. But the good news is that it is not too late for this Congress to do better, and now is the time.

We must do better for Mary. We must do better for Dylan. We must do better for Benjamin and for Charlotte, for Daniel and Olivia, for Josephine, for Ana and for Madeleine, for Catherine, for Chase and for Jesse, for James, for Grace and for Emilie, for Jack, for Noah and for Caroline, for Jessica, for Avielle and for Allison, for Rachel, Dawn, and Anne Marie, for Lauren and Victoria.

We can and we must do better.

These families cannot forget and will not give up. Neither can we.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McHENRY). Members are reminded that it is not in order to refer to occupants of the gallery.

EXTEND TAMP COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, for those serving our

country in uniform, transitioning to civilian life can be a stressful process, especially when the transition is involuntary or unexpected.

Currently, the Transitional Assistance Management Program, or TAMP, offers 180 days of health care coverage to certain servicemembers transitioning from military service to help bridge the insurance gap until coverage can be secured through employment or outside the service.

In many instances, traumatic brain injury symptoms do not appear until 8 to 10 months after deployment, and it is important that these individuals have mental health care access during that time.

This week, during the debate over the National Defense Authorization Act, I've offered two amendments, one of which would extend the TAMP coverage for servicemembers by an additional 180 days for any treatment provided through telemedicine.

Through the expansion of telemedicine, we can offer greater access to health care while lowering the cost. It's time we fully utilize these new technologies, which is why I encourage my colleagues to support this amendment. This commonsense, zero-cost reform will help those who serve our country transition to civilian life without unnecessary burden or undue delay.

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TIME FOR CONGRESS TO ACT IS LONG OVERDUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise to associate myself with the remarks of my dear colleague from Connecticut, ELIZABETH ESTY, who has done such a remarkable job in representing that district and especially the families of Newtown, Connecticut, in the aftermath of this horrific tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, the time for us to act is long overdue. The hard truth for the United States Congress is, as Congressman MIKE THOMPSON pointed out, since Newtown, 5,000 Americans have lost their lives at the point of a gun; 5,000 Americans since Newtown.

The United States Congress has a responsibility to act and do its constitutionally obligated desire to get this bill passed. Now, whether you believe this is the correct course of action or not, as the President said in his State of the Union message, you still have a responsibility to vote. This is a democracy. Every day that we delay a vote on this bipartisan bill, Congress is complicit—Congress is complicit—in the deaths of those American citizens who wait for action as Congress sits by as 5,000 more victims die at the point of a gun.

I commend the families of Newtown, and the whole world was heartened

when Mark Barton stepped out into the Rose Garden with the President of the United States and reiterated a phrase that has held them all together: that their hearts are broken, along with those of the entire world as we look down at this tragedy, but their spirit is not. And they are undaunted in their determination, driven by the memories of those teachers and administrators and students who died so tragically. They—both students and teachers—were willing to stand in the way of violence, and the United States Congress can't do its constitutional responsibility and stand up and vote?

All of us in America watched as the United States Senate, with families in the gallery, voted on background checks that 91 percent of the American people agree with, voted it down. No teacher in America could explain the next day how the vote was 54-46, and it lost. Citizens all across this country take heed: do not give up. Continue to fight this fight. Fight what's wrong with Congress about not taking votes when they should and about a system in the Senate where a majority prevails and a vote goes down because of the cloture rule, an arbitrary rule in the United States Senate.

The outrage has to start outside of this building because here in this building, people remain complicit in the acts that will only continue to take place if Congress does not take action.

PREVENTING FUTURE SHOOTING TRAGEDIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BARBER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARBER. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we observe the sixth-month anniversary of the senseless and tragic murders at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We will never forget what happened in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012, just as we will never forget what happened in Tucson, in Oak Creek, Virginia Tech, Portland, Milwaukee, and Columbine. As we remember the precious lives lost, we must also renew our determination to work together to make sure that such a tragedy never happens again.

As a survivor of the Tucson shooting that took place on January 8, 2011, as a grandfather of children the same age as those who were slaughtered in Newtown, and as a Member of Congress, I am committed to taking the reasonable action to make sure that we prevent future deaths and injuries from such mass shootings.

After the awful shooting and deaths in Newtown, the Sunday following I was reading the newspaper about the tragedy, and I saw a photograph of one of the children that was killed. As I looked at that photograph of this little 6-year-old girl, looking back at me from that page was my granddaughter that was the same age. I have to tell you that I sobbed, along with my wife. I think no grandparent and no parent